

FALL OF MENDES-FRANCE'S "MINISTRY OF HOPE"

Where Does French Democracy Go from Here?

HERBERT LUETHY

"WE WILL outlive Mendès-France," vowed the distillers of Normandy, Maine, and Artois at their convention in Louviers on January 20. It wasn't a hard prophecy to make—the distillers of France will survive anything, even a Second Flood, and besides, by that time you could read it in black and white in every hole-in-the-wall paper around the country that Mendès-France's days were numbered.

He had already outlived his own temperance campaign. Its most spectacular part, launched with such fanfare a few weeks earlier as accompaniment to the American trip of "Mr. France," had been junked in the late hours of New Year's Eve. So quietly that hardly anyone noticed it, ten minutes before adjourning the 1954 session, the president of the National Assembly hurriedly mumbled off eight decrees signed by Premier Mendès-France and three of his ministers. The bill "to prohibit the con-

sumption of certain beverages in public places at certain hours" was withdrawn, as were the bills to control the manufacture, repair, and sale of distilling equipment, to regulate brandy production, to combat public drunkenness, to provide for the policing of taverns and bars, to tax and restrict advertising of apéritifs and spirits, to establish conditions for licensing new drinking places, and to restrict the alcoholic content of certain beverages. Thus did a few more still-born reform projects enrich the archives of the National Assembly. The parliamentary term for it is "ballast" dumping.

SO MANY of the highly touted projects of the Mendès-France era had met that fate that when the inevitable government crisis came along no one was quite sure what the shouting was all about. The crisis became a distasteful affair involving personal rancor, with public issues serving as a mere pretext. The no-confidence vote on North Africa was a long-planned lynching party, complete with the fever of noose-tying and a pre-arranged ambush. The air in the unventilated Palais Bourbon became hotter and stickier than ever. "Tonight or never!" was the way Teitgen, chairman of the Popular Republican deputies, and head of the Christian Democratic family dynasty, goaded his vaguely conscience-stricken followers.

"Tonight" the North African policy of the Mendès-France government was up for discussion. Its stated aims embodied that policy of "free association" which the Popular Republicans themselves had called for at countless conventions, and once, in Robert Schumann's days, had even tried to carry out. In all its disjointedness—limited good will towards Tunisia, hopeless and stubborn continuance of terror in Morocco, and classi-

THE fall of Mendès-France as French Premier, after all the hopes raised by him both in France and abroad, is one more symptom of the Fourth Republic's inability to find a parliamentary regime stable enough even to begin the task of postwar economic reconstruction, much less that of solving her long-standing external problems. Instead we have, as HERBERT LUETHY shows us here, and has shown us before (in "France's New Parochial Nationalism" in our May 1954 number) a seemingly permanent stabilization of ineffective parliamentary government. Mr. Luethy, a frequent contributor, last appeared in our pages in November of the past year with "European Union Refuses to Stay Buried." He was born in Basel, Switzerland, in 1918, and educated at the University of Zurich. His interests extend to literature and economics as well as contemporary politics; recently, he published a book on France. This article has been translated from the German by E. B. Ashton.

cal military "pacification" in Algeria—this program epitomized every rotten compromise between liberalism and colonialism that had characterized France's North African policy for a decade. The six-months-old "Tunisian experiment," which was begun so boldly and hopefully with Mendès-France's sensational reconciliation trip to Tunis, only to bog down in endless haggling, had come to resemble more and more the similar "experiment" in 1951. This time, however, the consequences of failure would be worse.

The general assault on Mendès-France's Tunisian policy was unleashed by the same "colonial lobby" that three years before put an end to the first experiment with Tunisian autonomy and brought North Africa to the verge of civil war. But this made no difference. The debate in the Chamber of Deputies may have been over North Africa, but the stakes in corridors and caucus rooms were beet sugar, the Paris Agreements, cabinet portfolios, and revenge for what Mendès-France had done to Bidault.

NO CONFLICT, Montaigne said once, is more bitter than Christian conflict, and no hatred is more implacable than that of the righteous caught out. The spokesmen of the "colonial lobby" accused Mendès-France and his ministers of conspiring with North African nationalists and Soviet agents, but at the same time M. Fonlupt-Espéraber, an old Christian Democratic fighter against colonial police rule, unblushingly reproached the same government for crowded jails, military brutality, and "Gestapo methods" in North Africa. As if these ancient traditions of colonial rule had not flourished during the ten years in which the Christian Democrats had had full or partial responsibility for French policy in North Africa.

The *coup de grâce* to Mendès-France was administered by René Mayer, Algerian wheat tycoon and deputy for Constantine who belongs to the same party as the Premier and at the same time happens to be his pet aversion. (Mendès-France had played cat-and-mouse with Mayer for months by offering him the Foreign Ministry a dozen

times.) "I don't know where you're going," Mayer was now able to say. "A series of contradictions does not make a policy." And Mendès-France commented: "That was the donkey's kick" (meaning that now that the lion was dying the donkey could kick him to death with impunity).

The victors were able really to enjoy their triumph only when the fallen Premier's phenomenal self-esteem led him to flout every rule and tradition by returning to the rostrum after the announcement of the no-confidence vote to proclaim—"so it may be heard not only here but outside"—that his work would live on, that the nation would "not forget the hopes we revived," nor "forsake truth now that it has had a taste of it." This violation of French parliamentary ritual by the ambushed victim provoked scenes of hysteria similar to those of August 30, 1954, after the defeat of EDC. Old putachists of the extreme right who had once marched on the Palais Bourbon with fascists shrieked about a *coup d'état* and Bonapartism. The Communist deputies rattled their desk tops in defense of threatened parliamentary democracy, and the Popular Republicans screamed in chorus: "Fascist! Unconstitutional! Insurrection!" while their Socialist neighbors responded in accord with ancient ritual: "Down with the priests!"

Meanwhile François Mauriac tore his hair: "*Ils ont osé tuer la petite fille Espérance!*" (They have dared to kill that infant Hope.) The "infant Hope" (*espérance* is transcendental, not earthly hope) had been Mauriac's personal contribution to the theology of Mendèsianism. Now it was dark again on earth.

IT WOULD be hopeless to analyze Mendès-France's fall in terms of politics. What happened—if we disregard for the moment all the mud and dirt that was slung on this occasion—was nothing unusual. The French legislature, in line with its tradition of government by assembly, will tolerate no strong executive, least of all a chief executive with a popularity and personal authority of his own outside parliament that are not depend-

ent on his particular political orientation. To appeal to public opinion is the worst sin a politician can commit in a democracy that runs by parliamentary deals.

As in Pinay's case, no one could say in retrospect why and on what issue Mendès-France really fell. Actually, he fell because he did not play according to the rules. There were also historical echoes, as are frequent in the history-haunted Palais Bourbon. It was "a new Thermidor," and the clamoring deputies felt they were playing the part of the Convention that had shouted down Robespierre, the usurper.

The French legislature can muster no majority, express no definite will, strike no balance, but it shows at least the *esprit de corps*, the concern for its prerogatives, of a sovereign, albeit collective, power. It defends "the Republic" by defending itself, all the more indignantly because it is aware of its unpopularity. The popularity of the extra-parliamentary, and in the end all but anti-parliamentary, Mendès-France administration, which "made the nation feel it was at last being governed," was an accurate index to the unpopularity of parliament itself. The Mendès-France team relied upon, and vastly overrated, the "pressure of public opinion," which was felt in all parties but was quickly nullified by the party bureaucracies, even among the Socialists, who felt it most. Until the very end, the staff of *L'Express*, Mendès-France's "own" daily, harbored the illusion that parliament would "not dare overthrow a government backed by the people." (This misconception explains perhaps why the fallen Premier made his tactless last gesture.) But "they" did dare, and "the people" did not rise. The French may wish to "feel" they are being governed, but whether they really wish to be governed is something else.

In a parliamentary system nothing is more normal than the fall of a government that lacks a parliamentary majority. The case becomes pathological only when the parliamentary system can no longer produce anything but accidental, patched-up majorities. The National Assembly put in office by the

"prefabricated" elections of 1951 is so composed as to doom in advance any attempt to form a sensible and lasting coalition. Its hundred Communists and fellow-traveling deputies can act only as a negative factor. And its hundred ex-Gaullists are so much driftwood left behind by the receding Gaullist wave. Slowly decomposing into groups, still smaller groups, and lone wolves, they represent every conceivable tendency, from blind reaction to hare-brained national bolshevism. All that they betray of their common origin is a certain jingoistic vocabulary. Thus one-third of the National Assembly can be defined as dead weight.

The hundred "Independents" and "Peasants"—the real main force of conservatism in the Assembly—constitute the physical center of gravity of the parliamentary conglomeration. But they, in line with the traditions of the French conservative right, are splintered, not into organized parties, but into innumerable, bitterly antagonistic personal, local, and corporative cliques and coteries, none of which can combine for long. The organized democratic parties—Radicals, Socialists, Popular Republicans, which are the only parties presumably capable of governing and seriously opposing—hold less than half the National Assembly's seats between them. Running a government of "the left," of "dynamics," of "clear decisions" on such a parliamentary basis, which Mendès-France managed to do for a few weeks, and for six months in appearance, was a miracle.

He not only lacked a solid majority from beginning to end; he never found a political center of gravity around which a coalition might have crystallized. Summoned to liquidate the war in Indo-China, with a sentence of dismissal suspended for thirty days, he was able to turn the diplomatic ratification of a national defeat into a personal triumph. The stock of popularity he brought home from Geneva and promptly reinvested in Tunis gave him time to seat himself more firmly. But he never managed to collect a homogeneous following. By means of fluctuating majorities and ministries he kept himself afloat from one debate to another.

THE Communists thought at the beginning of Mendès-France's rise that the time had come for a new Popular Front and a "reversal of alliances," and they followed him until EDC was defeated. The bulk of the orphaned Gaullists likewise joined him to kill the EDC, but they also hoped to refloat their stranded ship and again pose before the public as "renovators." With the signing of the Paris Agreements, this support began to disintegrate. Precisely because the Paris Agreements basically meant the triumph of the old Gaullist theses on national sovereignty and German rearmament, the Gaullists did their best to deny them and father the unloved child upon the "Europeans." The Socialists—the only party upon whose votes Mendès could count until the end—consistently refused to cooperate with his government after the failure of his oddly unskillful effort to mobilize the Socialist rank and file against their party leaders. The Radicals, the Premier's own party, staged a spectacular celebration in his honor at their October convention and tried to sun themselves at first in the fresh splendor of his "dynamism." But the Radical party, with its interchangeable loyalties, is the unsinkable cork that always bobs to the top in the parliamentary tub. It was a fellow Radical, Mayer, who finished off Mendès-France's administration, and it was another fellow Radical, Edgar Faure, who had indeed served in his cabinet, who became his successor. Eventually, Mendès-France's sole reliable parliamentary support came from a heterogeneous crowd of dissidents inside the various parties who were eager to be "in" for once; from independents looking for company, from "unclassifiable" personal friends, and at the very last even from deputies obliged to him for certain unorthodox favors.

"Dynamism" was the air "Mendèsianism" lived on. By constantly accelerated motion alone Mendès-France was able for a time to outmaneuver the lumbering party machines that were always getting set to hit him where he had been last week. His tactic of addressing himself to a new problem, "disposing" of it fast, then passing on to another prevented

the different oppositions to every single part of his policy from teaming up. But this race against time could not long continue. Early in September, when the Indo-Chinese, Tunisian, and EDC problems had been disposed of for the time being, *L'Express* began to worry about ways and means of avoiding a "relapse into immobilism" and maintaining "the dynamism of the advance." "There is but one means," it wrote, "the pressure of public opinion, the pressure of the young generation. . . . The slightest hesitancy, the first change of pace will make defeat certain. The hopes and energies mobilized by the new team can never serve for deals and compromises to the end of reconciling hostile forces. Daring and stringency alone nurture the national will."

It was a somewhat murky prose that flowered in the shadow of Mendès-France. But the intuition was correct: the hundred days of dynamism were over. The war of attrition began. And it soon became apparent that none of the problems whose "files" had been opened and closed with such magical speed—for that had been the essence of Mendès-France's political "genius"—had thereby ceased to exist.

FOR a few weeks this fatal change of pace was concealed by the great diplomatic crisis following on the rejection of the European Defense Community. Nobody was very eager to take the responsibility and shoulder the blame. Internationally and diplomatically speaking, the EDC crisis ended with the agreements of London and Paris, and the "Europe of Six" is now buried and forgotten. But it still haunts the French, an unlaidd specter that keeps alive all the ire and hatred and zeal that accompanied the long war of position between "Europeans" and "anti-Europeans," "EDCers" and "anti-EDCers." The conflict is still as irreconcilable as it was in the two years when EDC, the "skeleton in the closet," poisoned debate in the Palais Bourbon. The Paris Agreements have substituted one international combination for another, and one form of German rearmament for another. To France, all it

means is the reappearance on her Eastern frontier of a politically and militarily sovereign German state no longer subject to her control. And though the transformation may still be obscured by the continuity of the Bonn government, this new Germany has—owing to a French decision—ceased to swear by "Europe" and "the West." Slowly, and still muddled by her dreams of "freedom from alliances," of neutralism, national unity, and an understanding with Russia, West Germany is beginning to drift in the opposite direction. Certain forms of German anti-militarism may turn out to be more disturbing to France than one or two dozen German divisions would be.

EDC has as many friends in France as German rearmament in any form has opponents. The Paris Agreements, intended to please both factions, have no friends at all. Fear of the difficulties looming after another rejection may cause a majority of the French deputies to let the Paris Agreements pass, but hardly a handful of them are ready to go to bat for them. The *ohne mich* spirit thrives in France, too, in the Palais Bourbon. In December the Agreements were demonstratively rejected; then this was reversed, by dint of Mendès-France's full strength, and arguments that in the days of EDC would have been considered fraud and blackmail. Finally the Agreements were passed by a barely adequate number of votes from "anti-EDCers," who voted as they did because anything else would have looked like triumphant revenge on the part of "Europeans" and "anti-Mendèsians." These were not votes for the Agreements, but for the Premier and his quasi-official pledge that the Agreements would never have to be put into practice because he would reach an understanding with Russia first. If at some future time the Paris Agreements should come up for ratification in the Council of the Republic, or at a second reading in the National Assembly, they would be opposed by those who had voted for them with this mental reservation; and they would have to be rescued by those who had opposed them at first. Even so, a majority still seems likely;

France's foreign policy, too, will henceforth be carried on with interchangeable majorities, and as a necessary evil.

At this distance in time the French rejection of EDC can be seen for what it was: a victory for parochialism and a retreat into a passive foreign policy under the shelter of America and Britain. And therein lay perhaps the most profound contradiction of the Mendèsian "national revolution" which was claiming to open a dynamic era, but began by closing the windows and pulling down the shades.

ISSUES supposedly settled by Mendès-France kept churning in the other filing cabinets he had opened and closed at such a record pace. The word "solution" is one of the most abused catchwords of political demagoguery: there are no solutions in politics, only chances to affect and perhaps guide developments, to speed them up or delay them.

Mendès-France closed the Indo-Chinese file at Geneva, did not look at it again, and never chose between the alternative French policies: agreement with Ho Chi Minh and consolidation of South Vietnam, or systematic withdrawal from Indo-China. Six months after Geneva the situation is still drifting—towards a new catastrophe. For the present, handing the North to the Communists and putting the disintegrating South under the care of the Americans has indeed gotten Indo-China "off the necks" of the French—but at the same time the government has stripped itself of virtually all power to fulfill its obligations under the armistice. Meanwhile the Tunisian file had grown into a mountain of conference minutes; the no less pressing Algerian and Moroccan files were never opened; and there was of course no time to tackle still other problems. The capacities of one-man government are limited, even if the one man has superhuman energy.

The second phase of the Mendèsian experiment began as its "consolidation." The movement had come to a halt, but the "style of the movement" was maintained—the style of a marathon runner carved in marble.

There came the flowering of a vocabulary: Youth, Dynamism, Modernity, Will, Hope, which soon replaced all exact statements of methods and objectives. What followed next was a series of brilliantly improvised soap bubbles: the Franco-German industrial co-operation scheme, the North African industrial combine, the fight against alcoholism, the free milk and surplus sugar distribution to school children, the establishment of the "Ministry of Hope"—*secrétariat d'Etat préposé à l'Espérance*—which recalled Orwell's 1984. There followed tours of cities by Mendès-France, speeches to the youth, baby-kissing—then his twin apotheoses: the first was at the Marseilles convention of the Radical party, where the Republican Old Guard, delighted at its sudden rejuvenation, acclaimed Mendès-France (while the time bombs set for his overthrow were being prepared in the back rooms of that same convention). The second apotheosis was the American trip of "Mr. France."

By the time he returned the magic had worn off. The last and all but tragic phase opened: the battle for the ratification of the Paris Agreements—and Mendès tried desperately to remain afloat beyond this point, by any means, however mean and petty.

The Mendésians have always, and often justly, accused their opponents of waging a ceaseless "*procès d'intentions*" against Mendès-France: of imputing to him all sorts of evil designs because they could find nothing vulnerable in his actions. In a few police-type brains on the extreme Right, these insinuations had grown to mythomaniacal proportions. But it is a fact that his "government of clear decisions" remained to the end a government of ambiguities. This resulted almost inevitably from its political, its parliamentary, and (something never to be forgotten in France!) its police-conspiratorial situation. It was P. M.-F.'s own propaganda staff that constantly circulated conflicting official, semi-official, and unofficial versions of his "real" intentions, in order to keep the disparate elements of his following in line; in the very last days before his fall Mendès himself tried to win back the support or at

least the neutrality of the Communists by semi-official promises about his foreign policy after ratification of the Paris Agreements.

The mistake—or the malice—was to assume that Mendès-France had come to power with any clear-cut, over-all political conception. Actually his whole ideological stock-in-trade was the conviction that France could regain her strength and stature under nothing more than a skillful manager who would blow the accumulated dust off the files, wipe the slate clean, and then decide on everything without prejudice, according to the facts of the case. He had no one big idea, but a great many good ideas. He believed in the effectiveness of sheer pragmatic ability; this belief had much to recommend it, and went wrong only in mistaking political problems for arithmetical ones, solvable by bookkeeping methods.

For a few weeks this fresh, realistic breeze caused a welcome clearing of the air and shook up some false beards and poses. But in the final result the great magician's show of the "eternally young, eternally forward-marching, eternally revolutionary Republic" clarified nothing and only muddled things a little further. (It is just this kind of phraseology that keeps France from seeing herself as she is.) The great question now is whether Mendésianism will remain a force to reckon with after its parliamentary demise.

FROM a parliamentary point of view, the settlement of the succession to Mendès was simple, even if the ritual of the crisis seemed complicated. The National Assembly has rediscovered its center of gravity. The eternal faultfinders, once more carping at "French instability," really ought to admire the magnificent continuity beneath this seeming chaos. Edgar Faure was Minister of Economics, Finance, and Planning in the Laniel administration, the one that became a popular legend as the embodiment of ossified reactionary, unsocial "immobilism." Edgar Faure was Minister of Economics, Finance, and Planning in the Mendès-France administration, the one that won international renown as the epitome of a progressive, youth-

ful, all but revolutionary activism. And now Edgar Faure is Premier.

Unswervingly, the same economic policy is continued, by the same all-powerful finance ministry operating now under a leftist, now under a rightist label. In the modernistic garb of Edgar Faure's "neo-capitalism" it faithfully follows the centuries-old mercantilist traditions of the "Grand Commis"—their instinctive distrust of any natural survival of the fittest through free competition, their unshakable conviction that it is up to the *Contrôle général des Finances* to steer the nation's life in the prescribed channels by systematically skimming and redistributing the national income, by precariously balancing huge deficits that are never reduced but are occasionally wiped out by inflation, by an inextricable mechanism of subsidies, grants, fiscal privileges, compensations, and "reconversions." It is a system that cannot function without the rigid framework of "national economic sovereignty." But with the assault on that sovereignty now beaten off, and with France, too, blithely afloat on the present euphorious general prosperity in Western Europe, there is less reason than ever for changing methods or conceptions.

This program of administrative continuity offers no political platform for the simple reason that it is not an issue. Once a whole nation has become a public welfare client, the only argument is about distribution quotas.

Political debate, however, feeds on myths, and there is no doubt that a new myth has been added to French politics: the "P. M.-F. myth." Six months of governing in his brilliant "new style" have not only made of Mendès-France one of those consular personalities that stand ready to master any emergency; they have also given him the special position of predestined candidate for exceptionally dangerous situations. The real question is whether it will be possible to activate the "P. M.-F. myth" off the floor of the Assembly, in a "Mendèsian movement"—which was what the Premier quite clearly intended to do when he used the rostrum of

the Palais Bourbon to appeal to the people against the no-confidence vote.

THE conditions seem propitious. France faces an election year, and all the energies of parties and politicians are now engaged in lining up for it. This was the sole meaning of the changes and false starts in the recent government crisis, with its "left" and "right" swings of the pendulum. In this pre-election mood, the "leftist" label is always much sought after, and Mendès-France has done much to bring it back into fashion. Thanks to his rejuvenation treatment, Radicals and Gaullists have successfully placed themselves on "the left," and what infuriated the Popular Republicans more than anything else was the realization that they were being pushed over on "the right."

Towards the end of the year, François Mauriac and André Malraux acted as godfathers to a still fairly ethereal "new left" in *L'Express*, the chief Mendèsian newspaper; and after P. M.-F.'s fall the same paper drew up a complete plan of action to "mobilize the masses" for the next election. The program was inspired by every revolutionary period in French history; neither the *Cahiers de doléances* of 1789 nor the "banquet campaign" of 1848 was missing. The journalistic potentialities of such a campaign are not to be underrated in view of the great talent which the P. M.-F. team has shown in this field. And it is more of an advantage for a myth than a drawback if its content is nebulous and its character really definable only in such stylistic terms as novelty, youth, movement, dynamics. But who is going to line up behind the new myth? The label of the "new left" has been passed out dozens of times, and most of the groups that had adopted it—groups in which dissidents of the classic left keep forming new combinations with disillusioned activists of Gaullism and Christian Democracy—quit Mendès-France months ago, when he, in their eyes, "betrayed Mendèsianism." None among the Socialists, trade-unionists, or "progressives" and neutralists agitating for a new Popular Front, not to mention the Communists, has

the slightest intention of recognizing Mendès-France as "Leader of the Opposition." The left is too crowded and organized in too many parties and sects to leave room for a "new left." The Gaullists, on the other hand, have rejected the Mendèsian blandishments, testily pointing out that if a chief is wanted for a "renovation movement" they already have one. They did not mind the Mendès-France administration, especially since they were well represented in it, but in the final analysis they feel it only bore out General de Gaulle's contention that "nothing can be done under this system." This does not prevent his faithful adherents from occupying as many cabinet chairs in Edgar Faure's administration as in Mendès-France's.

As for new bills of grievances in the style of the *Cahiers de doléances*, these are now being edited on a large and often violent scale by the peasant organizations and the "Poujade movement." The latter represents a spontaneous uprising of the backward areas of France, of the stagnated and impoverished *mezzogiorno*, of the small businessmen whom the ebb tide of inflation has re-pauperized. With its sinister tincture of xenophobia and anti-Semitism, and its boundlessly exploitable faith in slogans—elements apparently ingrained in every middle class "revolt"—this movement can be used for election purposes, but hardly by a Mendèsian "new left."

In sum, the experiment in style of the P. M.-F. has not brought France any closer to a clarification of her problems of political alignments. A new myth has been born, but myths are not what France is lacking in.

ALMOST all French political mystification begins with a mixup of dates, and the many noted historians active in French politics, like Herriot, Daladier, and Bidault, excel in such mixups. "We are in the year 1788," Pierre Mendès-France exclaimed at the 1953 Radical convention, and Edouard Herriot, the Grand Old Man, greeted the old party's young genius with the jubilant

cry: "And you are our Necker!" This comparison of the most astute, quick-witted, and competent political analyst the Radical party has produced in years with one of history's most fatal stuffed-shirts was an enigmatic compliment.

The solemn, pompous Geneva banker whose artistry in borrowing money prolonged the life of the insolvent Bourbon monarchy by a few years, only to make it founder in all the more hopeless bankruptcy, was the first statesman in French history—perhaps in world history—to be a pure creature of publicity. The clamor of the "philosophers" he fed at his table, of the literary salons and enlightened cafes not only forced him on Louis XVI's desperate court but made the public accept him as a great wizard who could get rid of all problems without sweat or tears, without taxation or infringement of privileges—by the mere miracle of credit. Unperturbably doubling the public debt at usurious rates, mortgaging the future, and palming off the deficit as a surplus, Necker conjured up, for a hopelessly bankrupt system, one more illusion of buoyancy, youth, and hope. And when he fell, the people really rose: the traders, the savers, the philosophers, even the rabble. It is indicative of the whole national sense of history that this caricature was the highest praise that Herriot felt he could bestow upon his "crown prince designate."

The strangest feature in the political mentality of this seemingly so rational country is its unlimited belief in miracles. Nothing is as bad as it appears, and if the ship of state should really run aground, the Maid of Orleans would be just around the corner—Joan of Arc or Charles de Gaulle, Necker, or Mendès-France, "le préposé à l'Espérance." But France is not in the year 1788, either for better or for worse. The *Contrôle général des Finances* has no trouble handling its one thousand billion deficit, and nothing points to the imminence of a new 1789—which was, after all, an explosion of vitality that shattered all ancient forms.